

PLAN FOR THE
NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE
LAKE CITY COMMUNITY
1999 - 2014

North District Neighborhoods' Planning Effort
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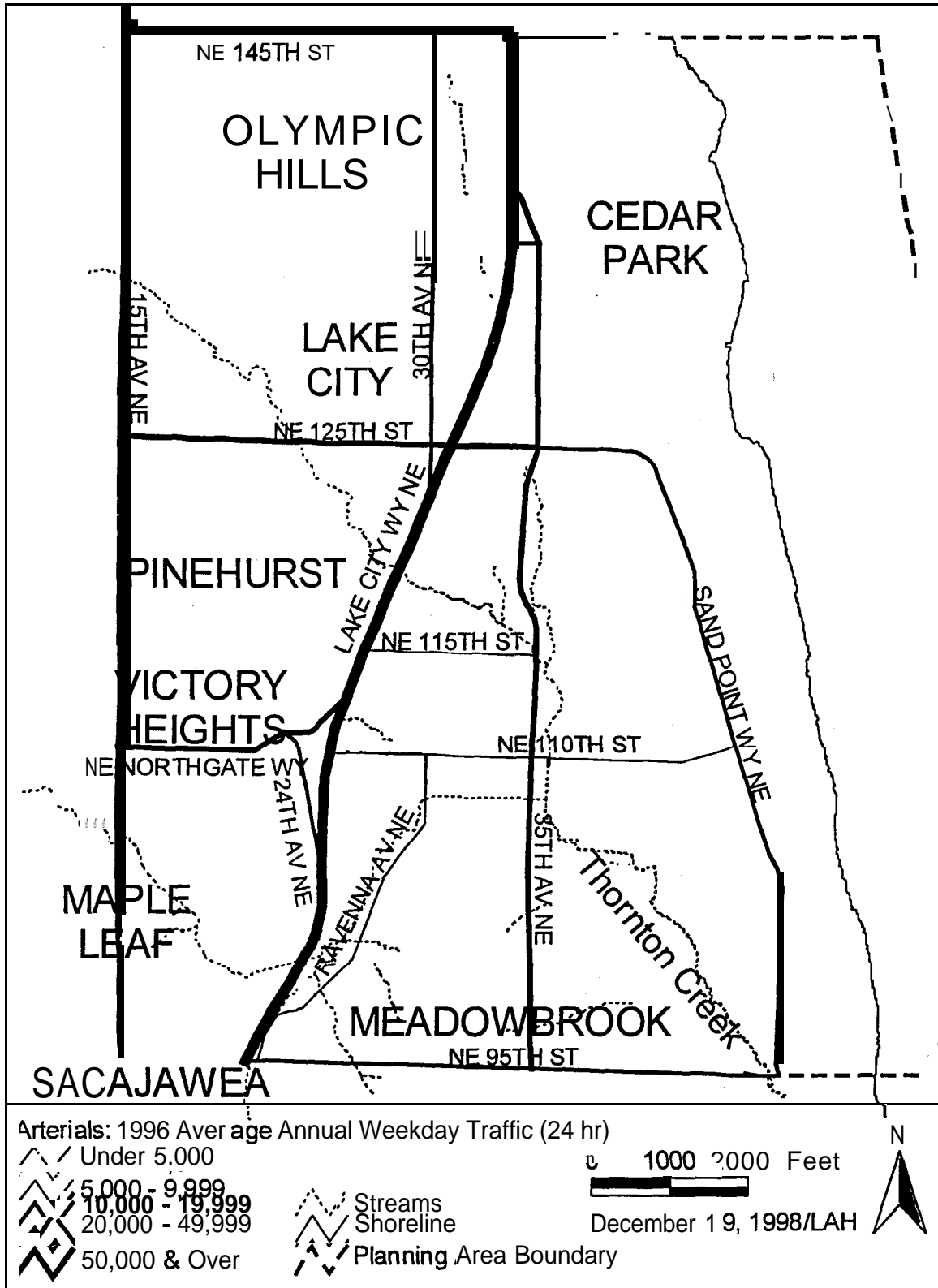


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GLOSSARY

ACTION: A specific project or program.

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA mandates wheelchair-accessible entrances and travel ways for new public facilities (buildings, sidewalks, etc.)

BUILDING (OR BLOCK) FACE: That portion of a building or block of buildings that faces a street.

BUILD-OUT CAPACITY: The maximum possible residential or commercial occupancy permitted on a parcel of property (or for an area of properties) under prevailing zoning

CIVIC CORE: A concentrated area, near to the Lake City business district, in which are located most of the community's public facilities, such as the library, community center, or community openspace.

COMP PLAN (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan): The City of Seattle's 1994-2014 Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council in 1994 pursuant to the requirements of the state's Growth Management Act. Goals and policies in the North District Neighborhoods Plan will be officially adopted and incorporated into the City's Comp Plan.

CURB BULB: An extension of the sidewalk into a street right-of-way, to effect safer pedestrian crosswalks and/or to help calm or control traffic at an intersection or mid-block along denser pedestrian areas.

CURB RAMP: An ADA-accessible ramp, typically found at building entrances and street crosswalks, connecting walkway surfaces to building entrances and streets by means of a continuous, gentle grade suitable for individuals in wheelchairs or with other ambulatory difficulties.

GATEWAY PLAN: The previous neighborhood plan prepared for the Lake City area, adopted by the Seattle City Council in 1977. All provisions of the Gateway Plan are superseded by this plan.

GOAL (or GOALS): A desired end result, toward which energies and resources are directed.

GREEN STREETS: A general city designation for selected streets or rights-of-way along which various types of pedestrian amenities, including landscaping elements, will be located.

HUB URBAN VILLAGE (HUV): A contiguous area specifically designated by the community pursuant to the City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, to accept new residential and commercial development so as to meet the Planning Area's allotted share of the City's population and employment growth targets. (See Goal 2.9 for specific boundaries.)

NORTHGATE PLAN (Northgate Comprehensive Plan): The comprehensive plan adopted by the Seattle City Council in 1993 that controls development and growth in the Northgate planning area.

PLANNING AREA (North District Neighborhoods' Planning Area): The area bounded by Northeast 95th Street on the south, NE 145th Street on the north, 15th Avenue Northeast on the west and Lake Washington on the east (see map on Page 2).

P-PATCH: An area devoted to community gardening within which small plots are available to individuals at nominal rents, Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods provides assistance in their planning.

POCKET PARKS: Small public-use parks provided at frequent intervals throughout neighborhoods in the Planning Area.

POLICY: A guiding principle or procedure, considered to be prudent or advantageous to follow in order to achieve a goal.

RIGHTS-OF-WAY (ROW): Land in public ownership for purposes of enabling transportation of goods and people to, from, between and across other land. Includes streets, pathways, sidewalks and utility corridors and easements.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS: People in need of (or who can benefit from) special assistance, such as seniors, the physically challenged, disabled, children and youth.

STEWARDSHIP: Community volunteer efforts to organize or administer and supervise or manage any community project identified in the plan. To "steward" something is to see it through to completion.

STRATEGY: The general manner by which specific actions are to be structured, sequenced and/or prioritized so as to most effectively achieve stated goals, consistent with stated policies.

WATERSHED: An area defined and bounded by natural groundwater drainage, draining ultimately to a major river or body of water.

ZONING: The legally permitted use or uses for a parcel of property. Zoning is established by a local government jurisdiction (e.g. the City of Seattle) through adopted ordinances.

"If self-government in a place is to work, [there] must be a continuity of people who have forged neighborhood networks. These networks are a city's irreplaceable social capital. Whenever the capital is lost, from whatever cause, the income from it disappears, never to return until and unless new capital is slowly and chancily accumulated."

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)

PART 1 -INTRODUCTION

The North District Neighborhoods' Planning Area contains a proposed Hub Urban Village (Lake City) surrounded by residential neighborhoods (Cedar Park, Meadowbrook, Sacajawea, Victory Heights, Pinehurst, Olympic Hills). Covering about 4.5 square miles, the Planning Area is bounded by Lake Washington to the east, 15th Avenue NE to the west, NE 145th Street (the city line) to the north and NE 95th Street to the south. More than 400 businesses operate in the Planning Area. The Planning Area also contains approximately 25,000 residents living in approximately 8,500 households.

The Planning Area is required to plan for at least 1,400 new dwelling units (households) and 2,900 jobs over the next 20 years. That is the Planning Area's allotment, or share, of the City's anticipated **20-year** population growth. During the period from 1994 through 1998 absorption rates are ahead of projections, with more than 114 units already completed and approximately 500 additional units in various stages of permitting. While this allotment can easily be absorbed without any zoning changes (the Planning Area's build-out capacity can theoretically accommodate an additional 16,000 dwelling units), it is precisely because such a potentially large increase in the area's population would impose very significant impacts on the area's existing neighborhoods that a key objective of this planning effort was to identify policies that would ensure preservation of the character of the area's existing residential neighborhoods.

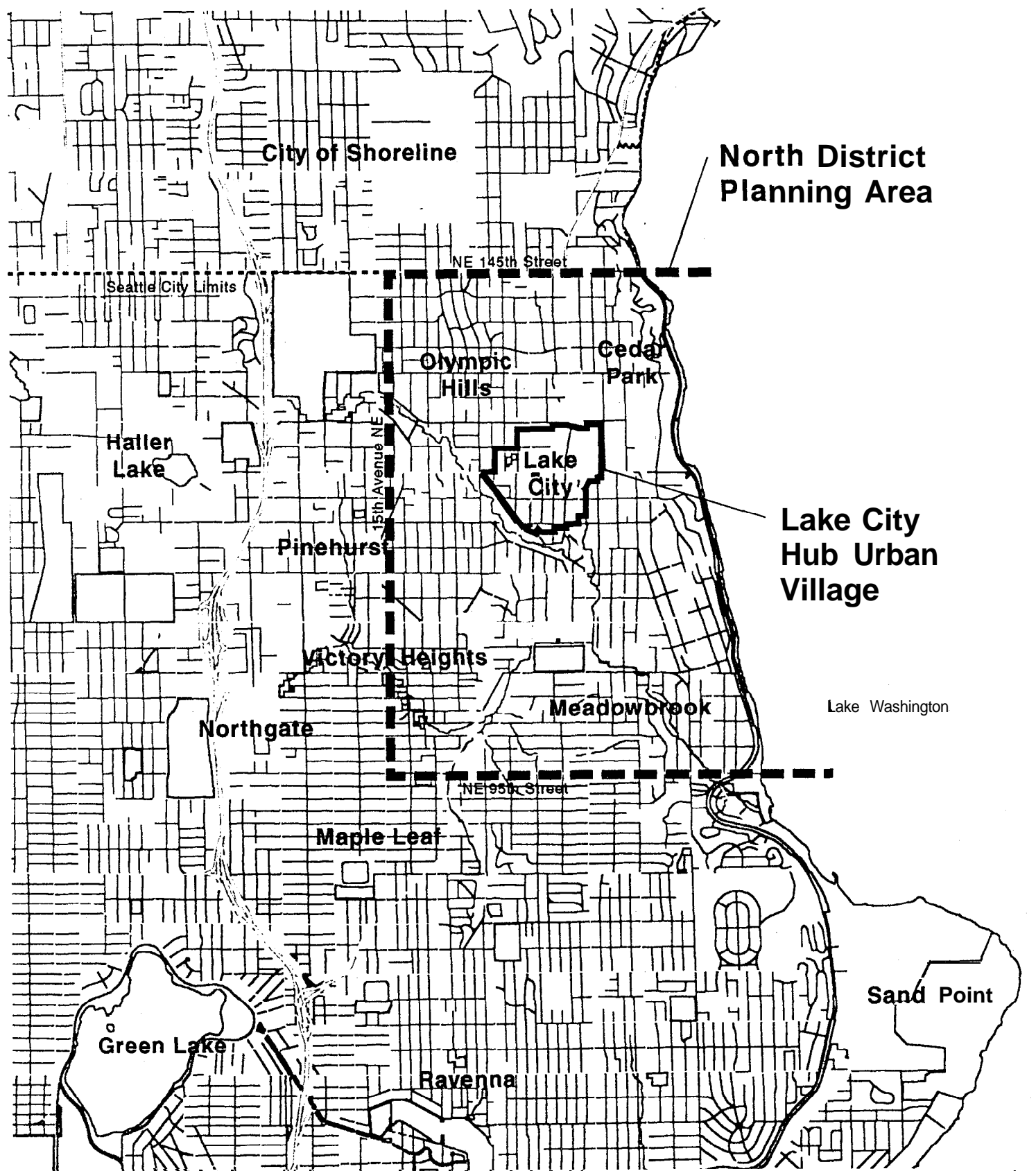
It is not by accident that this large Planning Area was adopted for our planning effort. When the City proposed a Hub Urban Village (HUV) for Lake City and offered the opportunity for neighborhood planning, it was clear to the volunteers who stepped forward to address planning that the neighborhoods adjacent to the village would be directly affected and should have an equal voice at the planning table with those considering urban village needs. An inclusive process was designed which offered any interested citizen with any relationship to the Planning Area an opportunity to become actively involved in planning at whatever level of participation was desired.

Many of the participants who stepped forward are relative newcomers to the area (15 years or less of residence). Getting to know one another and the long time

residents of the community has thus far been the chief benefit of the planning process; the

Illustration 2. Planning Area and Lake City Hub Urban Village

North District Planning Area and Lake City Hub Urban Village



planning effort has largely been about building the essential networks referred to in the introductory quotation. This requires individuals who have a stake in the community and are willing to take the time to talk and work together for the future of the community.

Fortunately, the volunteers for this effort also included long-time residents and business owners. Their collective memory has been very helpful for lodging the planning effort in a firm sense of place and history. Upwards of a hundred area residents and business people have devoted multiple thousands of hours of effort to produce this plan. The goals, strategies and actions contained in the plan have been forged from extensive public input, ranging from surveys and questionnaires of area residents, presentations to numerous local community organizations, discussions in an array of topical work groups and a variety of collective, committee-of-the-whole workshops. The contents of the plan represent the collective voice of the community and the neighborhoods that constitute the North District Planning Area.

This plan aims both to 1) correct the perceived deficiencies that separate the Planning Area from its potential as a unique and vital community and 2) set the stage for new development that can add to that vitality. This plan identifies a set of over-arching goals aimed at solving these problems and establishes policies and strategies by which these goals can be achieved, in cooperation with the City of Seattle and other public and private organizations.

The success of this planning effort, however, is not to be measured by the mere publication of the plan, however arduous that process has been. Instead, its success (or failure) will be measured by how effective it will be in enlisting broad community support in stewarding the neighborhood and community improvements it identifies through to completion in the years ahead. Also critical to the plan's success are the general health of the community--will be the extent to which City officials and City departments will support the goals and projects put forth in this (and other) neighborhood plans. It has been the explicit desire of planning effort volunteers to support the community council system and build upon the significant step in neighborhood empowerment which the City took in 1986 when it created the current system of Neighborhood and District Councils. Proposals within this plan call for strengthening the system and empowering it to accommodate good stewardship by citizen volunteers.

It is the expectation of the planning committee that the City will work in a collaborative manner in implementing the approved plan. Overall achievement of this plan will begin if and when the City assertively obtains the necessary capital to fund the infrastructure so desperately needed in this area. Efficiencies must be leveraged by having representatives work across departments together to coordinate activities and budgets in achieving specific actions called for in the plan. These representatives should be accountable for their assigned responsibilities and receive feedback from the Planning Committee or appropriate stewardship organization. Now that the citizenry has become aware of the planning, it is no longer willing to accept this area being ignored. The citizenry has responded

positively to the plan and is eager to move forward with implementation in partnership with the City. We invite the City to join us to “get going.”

Finally, one must always remember that a plan is a fluid thing. It is never final. Instead, it is a document always in the process of becoming. It is expected that this plan and its elements will likewise ebb and flow as the years progress. Accordingly, this plan represents, at this point in time, the best possible representation of the collective vision, or voice, of the community regarding where it sees itself in the future. After this plan is adopted by the City, future changes will require the normal amendment process for the **CompPlan**.

1 .I THE VISION

The vision of the North District Neighborhoods' Plan is to protect and enhance the residential neighborhoods that surround the Lake City commercial district while the area designated for a hub urban village is developed with a unique, positive image. Important components of this vision are:

- 9 Cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets eliminated or mitigated, pedestrian facilities expanded, and neighborhood-oriented transit opportunities integrated with intra-city and regional systems;
- 9 A safe, convenient, pedestrian-friendly and accessible Lake City business district with new residential and commercial development in the hub urban village that contributes to a vital and attractive community;
- 9 Crime reduced and the reality and perception of security and safety increased throughout the Planning Area;
- 9 A heightened sense of community, expanded opportunities for active community involvement, and shared responsibility to advance and protect community interests;
- 9 Open spaces that are safe, clean and responsive to local needs and natural systems that are protected and restored;
- 9 Residential neighborhoods protected from the impacts of commercial activity and new development.
- 9 A Hub Urban Village as a means to help guide the Planning Area's anticipated growth, protect existing residential neighborhoods and deter inappropriate development from encroaching on those neighborhoods.

The plan envisions a diverse, inviting and engaging business district **conven** and accessible by vehicles as well as by foot, bicycle or wheelchair. The **pla** envisions a hub urban village large enough not only to encourage creative n styles of housing, but large enough to permit a graceful transition of density, and bulk at its periphery alongside existing residential areas.

The plan envisions a centrally-located Civic Core with a cluster of **community** facilities and institutions-an expanded library, a new and expanded commu center-surrounding an open landscaped plaza serving as a community gath space. The plan envisions new, mixed-use commercial and residential development along streets adjacent to this cluster of community facilities.

Last, but certainly not least, the plan -envisions the elimination of regional **ve** **traffic** from neighborhood and city streets, so that the area's street network c support safe, motorized and non-motorized use by area residents of all age: physical condition desiring to travel within neighborhoods or to schools, the Core, the business district, or any community park, recreational facility or na system in the Planning Area.

1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

TRAFFIC, STREETS AND ROADS

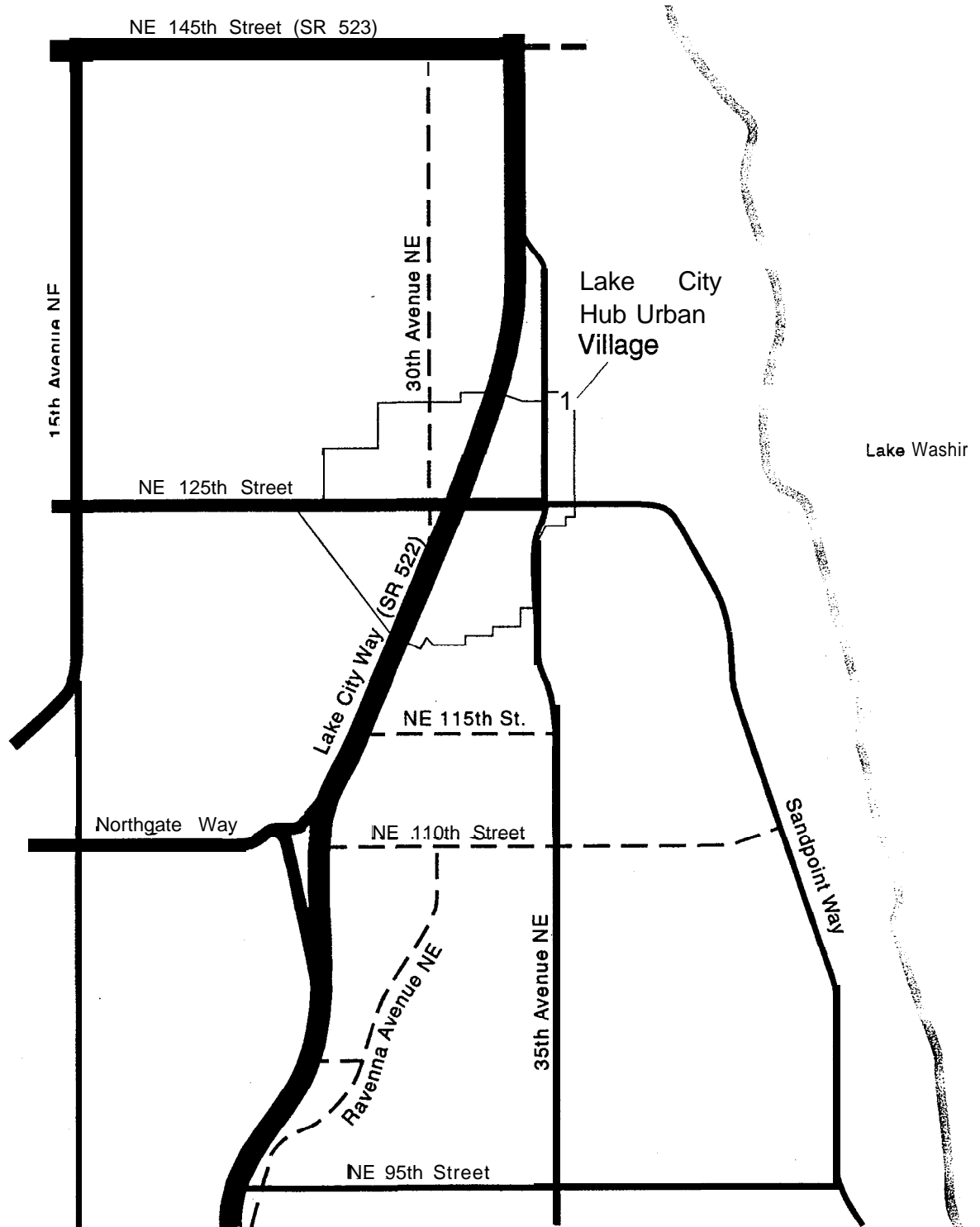
The Planning Area's transportation network is called upon to serve very sign amounts of regional, "pass-through" traffic. Lake City Way (SR 522), the are most notable transportation facility, serves as a major regional travel **corrido** connecting Seattle with residential and employment centers north and east o Washington. Another state highway, SR 523 (NE 145th Street), similarly ser a significant regional road link, providing a shorter and more direct east-wes connection to I-5 from these same suburbs.

Rising levels of regional pass-through traffic on Lake City Way have resulted worsening levels of congestion at several locations in the Planning Area. An and more pass-through drivers have chosen to utilize a variety of short-cuts and neighborhood streets to avoid various congestion points on the state **hig** in our the Planning Area. This is particularly true where the predominant no south traffic flow along SR 522 is interrupted by traffic signals serving east-v traffic joining or crossing Lake City Way. These city streets were not **designe** handle these non-local traffic volumes, are not sufficiently equipped to **contr** speeds characteristic of cut-through **traffic**, and have neither adequate stree shoulders nor separation from vehicle traffic that would enable the safety of pedestrians, children, bicyclists and others attempting to use neighborhood :

Other deficiencies in the Planning Area's transportation network have also lo been simmering. Put bluntly, the area's streets and public utility infrastru languished since annexation to the City of Seattle in the mid-1950s. The **me** commonly cited example: sidewalks that were promised by the City but **were**

delivered. But there's more: drainage in the Planning Area has long been inadequate, and power and street lighting is sub-standard. These conditions have exacted a price not only on the quality of life for area residents, but have also impaired the area's business and economic development potential. They compound the array of problems facing the Planning Area at this crucial time, as population pressures manifest themselves throughout the region and the City.

Arterial Streets



- Collector - under 5,000 (1996 Average Annual Weekday Traffic (24 hour))
- ===== Minor Arterial - 5,000 to 10,000
- ===== Principal Arterial - 10,000 to 20,000
- ===== State Highway - over 20,000

The transportation network serving the Planning Area's core business district is not up to standards, either. Several streets located near to the center of Lake City suffer the very same problems enumerated many years ago in the Gateway Plan. These streets are unattractive, uninviting and inhospitable. They lack curbs, gutters and sidewalks; are cluttered with power poles and wires; and have long streetscape expanses open to disjointed parking areas, storage and service lots, and the backsides of old buildings. These streets have also become subject to significant amounts of non-local traffic seeking alternate routes quicker and less congested than Lake City Way. All these conditions negatively affect the prospect for future development close to the area's business district.

Many area streets, including streets that directly provide access to the business district and Lake City Way from surrounding neighborhoods, are rather neglected and approaching a state of disrepair, with uneven, sometimes cracked and undulating surfaces. While these streets serve to funnel traffic to and through the area, they support few other functions of value to the community. In addition, many carry traffic loads beyond their original design, yielding to the cumulative stresses imparted by frequent transit and other vehicle use.

PEDESTRIAN WAYS

Sidewalks and safe pedestrian walkways are generally absent throughout the Planning Area. This is especially noticeable in areas leading to schools, to the business district, to Lake City Way and transit stops from adjacent neighborhoods. This deficiency restricts the ability of area residents-especially children, the elderly, the disabled and the car-less-to access shops and services, to enjoy their neighborhoods and the community's natural resources, and to even safely travel to school on foot. Yet, at the same time, many residents treasure the uniquely "rural" feeling that the absence of sidewalks provides.

But on streets just off Lake City Way and 125th, adjacent to the business district and near to important community facilities such as the library and community centers, areas for pedestrians are undefined and uninviting-almost hostile. More often than not, pedestrians must use the side of the road to travel to and from their destinations, even in the 'downtown' area. This condition is especially apparent the entire length of 30th, from 145th at the north all the way south of the business district to its intersection with Lake City Way at 123rd.

Inadequate surface drainage is also common throughout the Planning Area, in neighborhoods as well as in blocks surrounding the business district. In combination with the general lack of sidewalks, this means pedestrians often find themselves traversing an obstacle path of puddles and rivulets en route to the grocery store or the bus stop. Whether the weather is wet or dry, pedestrians are under-served.

BUSINESS DISTRICT

Vitality of businesses is generally good along Lake City Way. But the **regional** traffic that brings customers to those businesses also causes traffic and **safety** problems in adjacent neighborhoods. The business district seems to have a lot of parking; but it is poorly organized, poorly signed and inadequate to support further commercial and business development. Nor is there sufficient parking to serve the area's community facilities (library, community center, neighborhood service center).

Lake City is one of the most mature business districts in Seattle. It is also very diverse. Lake City businesses fall into fourteen different business categories, from retail sales to paper goods manufacturing. Perhaps the root of this diversity lies in the fact that many area businesses are quite small and potentially very fragile: nearly one quarter of the area's businesses generate less than \$100,000 in sales per year. However, automotive retail and service—the historical base of the area's economy—remains strong. The numerous auto-related establishments along the entire length of Lake City Way amply evidence this.

Despite the enumerated problems, the area remains an attractive place to locate new business. The area's growing population and solid personal income levels are factors that attract business to the area, but so is the growing volume of **regional** traffic carried on the SR 522 corridor. Recently, the area's business sector has witnessed the redevelopment of the Fred Meyer store, the development of additional fast food outlets and the arrival of some adult entertainment establishments. Businesses located along Lake City Way display a general orientation to serve customers from outside the area rather than customers living in the Planning Area or nearby neighborhoods. This is not an uncommon **situation** in communities bisected by major highways.

ECONOMIC PROFILE

The physical appearance of the area's businesses doesn't reflect the fact that a significant amount of business activity, estimated at almost \$1.9 billion in 1996, does occur in the Planning Area. Buildings in the central business district—many built in the post-World War II period up to and through the early **1960s**—have become old and run-down. To be sure, some newer commercial buildings—banks, bank branches, but also including the Washington Mutual office building at Lake City Way and **125th**—were constructed in the 1970s. But the general **condition** of the business district, including the commercial strips to the north and south of the central business district, is such that business owners and local residents repeatedly emphasize concerns with crime and public safety.

The area nevertheless annually produces a bounty of tax revenues for **government**. All told, the Planning Area generated an estimated \$117 million in 1997 in state and local taxes. Businesses in the Planning Area produced about \$64 million in

'Source: Regional Analytic Sciences, 1998

while residents paid about \$51 million. An additional \$2 million annually is estimated to be produced through real estate transactions and development activity in the Planning Area. A little over twenty percent of the state and local taxes produced in the Planning Area-about \$25 million annually-goes directly to the City of Seattle.

Several successful automobile dealerships operate in Lake City, and thus a sizable portion of the City's tax revenues received from the Planning Area are collected from customers who live outside the Planning Area, including customers from outside the City. While the City may claim to be interested in protecting and enhancing City tax revenues derived from persons living outside the City, evidence of such concern has not been particularly apparent since the area's annexation into the City.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS

A core of civic facilities-a library, community center, neighborhood service center, fire station, and a nearby post office (which collectively comprise the area's current Civic Core)--supports basic public services and serves some of the cultural needs of the Lake City community.

These current facilities are undersized to adequately serve the area's current population, much less meet the needs of future population growth. But there is little room (land) available to permit expansion of these facilities. For example, a much needed library expansion, including space required for parking, will likely require more nearby land than is currently in public ownership. This need, in combination with other identified needs in the Civic Core such as the creation of an attractive, open public gathering space or plaza nearby, will require creative solutions to "produce" sufficient land for public purposes and enjoyment in the HUV.

Five public schools and one private school, the Waldorf School, serve the Planning Area. The public schools are: Sacajawea elementary, Olympic Hills elementary, John Rogers elementary, Nathan Hale high school and Summit K-12 alternative school (located in the former Jane Addams junior high). The Seattle School District budgets few dollars for maintenance and improvements at these schools and consequently, there are needs to be addressed. Most notable among these are 1) parking improvements at Olympic Hills elementary to serve both the building and community use of the school playfield and 2) landscaping and trees around the grounds and playfields at Nathan Hale.

The last several decades of Seattle's population dynamics are evidenced by there being three public school properties that are now used for purposes other than school classrooms. Those properties are the Cedar Park school, the old Maple Leaf school site, and the former Lake City school (now the Lake City Professional Building).

Three of the public schools (Nathan Hale, Summit K-12 and John Rogers) are located near the Meadowbrook Complex, which includes ball fields, tennis courts, passive park space, a new community center and a swimming pool. Sometimes called the "Meadowbrook Commons," this area also houses sports fields for the

three schools and the new Meadowbrook Pond, a water retention project of Seattle Public Utilities. The Meadowbrook Commons is an important community resource drawing users from throughout north Seattle.

NATURAL SYSTEMS

The Planning Area is blessed with the presence of several noteworthy natural features of high value to area residents. These primarily consist of a major lake (Lake Washington) and a creek (Thornton Creek) whose extensive watershed drains into the lake. Additionally, stands of tall Douglas firs commonly nestle among the area's ridges, ravines, hills and streamsides, providing seclusion in an area that detractors dismiss as nothing more than a sea of car lots or a strip fast food outlets.

Along the shoreline of Lake Washington, hikers, walkers and bicyclists share a (Burke Gilman) reclaimed from an abandoned freight rail line. Sweeping vistas of the forested Cascades and to Mount Rainier are available from the trail and the bluff tops high above the lake. Even 'land-locked' residents, while having their groceries packed at the checkstand, can be rewarded with stunning views of Mount Rainier standing defiantly against the weather on blustery winter afternoons, as clouds part momentarily overhead and sudden, intense sunlight slants across the horizon.

Just beyond the southern boundary of the Planning Area is Matthews Beach, offering year-round wonder and enjoyment. These features sharply distinguish the Planning Area from Seattle's 'inner' neighborhoods and lend a feel of country life valued by area residents.

A feature of particular note is the Thornton Creek watershed. Two-thirds of the watershed, from Thornton Creek's origin north of 193rd at Ronald Bog to its outlet at Matthews Beach, lies within the Planning Area. The creek and its tributaries provide habitat for wildlife, native vegetation and fish and help to nourish the area's prized treescapes. At the same time, it is also used to drain surface water from the Planning Area to Lake Washington. Except for street crossings, over 90 percent of the creek system is open and flowing through ravines, parks or private backyards. Enhancement and preservation of the natural function of the Thornton Creek watershed is very important to many area residents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The area's population is on the young side, showing a median age of 35.5 years according to 1990 census data. Over one-third of the area's residents have completed four years of college. Approximately ten percent of area residents are currently enrolled in grades K-12. The school district has identified Cedar Park School for retention because of a growing need for elementary education in the area.

The area contains a healthy ethnic composition. In fact, during the 1985 to 1995 period, the 98125 zip code (which largely corresponds to the Planning Area) ranked fifth highest as a destination for immigrants of all zip codes in King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties. While this cultural diversity is an asset to the community, successfully coping with rapidly changing demographics and reaching out to newcomers presents an ongoing challenge for the Planning Area. As they have been traditionally defined, 'minority' populations (i.e. Asian, Black, Native American and other) account for about 18 percent of the area's population. Home ownership levels, at 51 percent, are somewhat below regional averages. Rents, however, are still rather affordable relative to other neighborhoods in Seattle. Along with most of the areas that comprise present-day north Seattle, the Planning Area was annexed to the City of Seattle in the **mid-1950s**, following a vote of (then-county) residents. Despite being part of the City, the area has maintained something of an independent streak and a sense of separation from Seattle.

OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Approximately half of the residents in the Planning Area have moved here within the last 15 years; and, many of these newcomers come from outside the United States. However, those reviving our community spirit are able to build upon an existing network of long-time residents and community organizations. Active service organizations include the Lion's Club, the Elks, Rotary, Lionesses, Lake City Vigilantes, Kiwanis, Community Center Board, etc. The Lake City Chamber of Commerce is vibrant and growing. Local churches provide an important focal point and source of community support. The North District Council and a variety of community councils and ad hoc community groups provide an important base for communication and civic activism.